

## **H.E.A.L.E.D./S.P.E.E.D. Community Garden Offers Opportunities Beyond Planting and Harvesting Local Organic Produce Through NC Fruits & Veggies Mini Grant**

The Special Populations Enrichment, Education and Employment Department (SPEEED) is a non profit organization under the umbrella of HEALED, Inc, that works to provide services to at risk and underserved youth and their families in Person County. With the motto, "Planting seeds...growing kids...inspiring vision...empowering All Full Throttle Towards Their

Destiny," this group of volunteers did just that with their organic gardening project in 2010 headed up by Nan Jeffers, Founder and Board Chair of SPEEED.



Four SPEEED conferences are held each year with the first dedicated to gardening and fostering development of agriculture entrepreneurial skills. Workshops for the kids' specific to nutrition, horticulture and safety are scheduled and organized around planting day. Conference One/Community Garden Planting Day was March



20, 2010 when 36 youth and 32 subcommittee members gathered on 3 acres of donated, newly plowed land to test their gardening skills. Using the \$1000 from the NC Fruits and Veggies Mini Grant<sup>1</sup> award, they purchased seed and supplies as well as materials to build a small produce stand. Partnering with food pantries, senior center and churches in the area, participants' goals were to feed needy families and help stock the Christian Help Center (the central food pantry) with local, fresh vegetables.

There was also an ambitious goal of being totally organic and more than a dozen different types of vegetables were planted. Squash and tomatoes were the most successful since there is no fencing around the garden and bugs and other animals

---

<sup>1</sup> The NC Fruits & Veggies Mini Grants were provided by the NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition ([www.fruitsandveggiesnc.com](http://www.fruitsandveggiesnc.com)). The one-time funding used for sponsoring the grant came from revenue and sponsorships generated by the Coalition.

found the produce delicious as well. Gardening teams were in place to nurture, harvest and spread awareness of this new community garden initiative, while committees were formed to handle policy and marketing. Senior gardeners partnered with and mentored youth participants.

Spring Conference and Community Garden Day for 2011 occurred on Earth Day, April 22. The garden will be a little less than 2 acres this year, but raised beds are new initiatives which are planned for different locations in the heart of the downtown area in Roxboro. The young entrepreneurs of SPEEED, ages 6-21 are in charge of these satellite gardens and proceeds from the sales of their produce along with other fund raisers will be used to fund school supplies and clothes for participating youth.

Nan sees this garden project as a connection to healthy food sources that promote community solutions to health and hunger issues in her community. But she values the opportunity that is provided to local youth to gain knowledge that can be applied to their own lives. Garden involvement teaches good life lessons, work ethics, problem solving and the feeling of empowerment by being able to help their families while helping the community at large.

For more information about H.E.A.L.E.D./S.P.E.E.E.D, its' gardening initiatives, or to contact Nan, go to <http://www.teamspeed.org/>